

Short-Term Water Reserve Account

Recommendation. The CALFED Policy Group should authorize expenditures of up to \$15 million for the purpose of implementing the short-term Water Reserve Account identified in the Department of Interior's Final Administrative Proposal on Section 32406(b)(2) of the CVPIA and described below.

Overview. The Water Reserve Account can be established in the short-term in cooperation with the Kern County Water Agency (KCWA). KCWA has offered to enter into a five year water supply program of up to 300,000 acre-feet per year for use by the Department of Interior (Interior) in implementing Section 3406(b)(2) of the CVPIA. The program would commence in 1998 and could extend through 2002.

The Kern County Water Agency and some of its member units propose to use existing facilities and construct additional facilities in the Kern River Fan area for storage and recovery of groundwater. These groundwater supplies would be available for use by Interior in 1999 to assist in implementing Interior's 3406 (b)(2) decision. Interior can choose to use the water available under this program if it is determined by April, 1999 that implementation of the eight Delta Actions in 1998 resulted in impacts to south of Delta water users that exceed the amount of water available under Interior's implementation of Section 3406(b)(2). The program requires the approval of DWR and the State Water Contractors. The key elements of the program are described below.

Borrowing. The KCWA program will allow Interior to borrow water previously stored in Kern County groundwater basins. Up to 300,000 acre-feet may be borrowed during the first year of recovery. Up to an additional 150,000 acre-feet may be borrowed in any subsequent year. If all 450,000 acre-feet is borrowed before any water is stored by Interior, then the amount of water available in all other years is limited to the amount of water Interior has stored in the program.

Replacement of Borrowed Water. Borrowed water must be replaced by Interior. Under the current proposal the water must be replaced within a specified period of time.

Storage in Advance of Recovery. Interior may store water in advance of recovery to preclude the necessity of borrowing water.

Recovery of water. Groundwater will be recovered and delivered by either pumping it directly from the groundwater basin and conveying it to the California Aqueduct or by delivering groundwater to KCWA surface water users in exchange for an equal amount of SWP supplies left in San Luis Reservoir.

Payment for Water. Interior will pay the Kern County Water Agency (KCWA) an up-front option payment to secure the ability to borrow water. Interior will also pay a negotiated price in the year water is taken, and is responsible for obtaining the power necessary to recover and convey the water.

The cost of implementing the short-term program includes construction of 46 groundwater wells estimated at \$250,000 each (\$11.5 million) and 3.5 million in option payments for a total expenditure of \$15 million.

The KCWA and its member units have developed a preliminary assessment of the amount of water that can be made available. This water is currently stored in groundwater basins in Kern County and can be withdrawn in the amounts described in Table 6.

Table 6					
Source	SWP Allocation (Acre-Feet)				
	30%	20%	15%	10%	0%
Kern Water Bank	118,800	118,800	118,800	118,800	118,800
Semitropic Water Storage Dist.	119,400	100,800	90,000	90,000	90,000
KCWA In-lieu Programs	71,400	60,100	54,500	48,800	37,600
Total	309,600	279,700	263,300	257,600	246,000

Timing for Implementation

The groundwater banking programs necessary to implement the short-term Water Reserve Account with KCWA are currently operating and do not require additional CEQA compliance. Interior participation would require NEPA compliance. It is estimated that the necessary NEPA documentation can be completed by February, 1998.

Because the KCWA program involves water already in groundwater storage, this program provides the best, quickly available source of water for implementation of the Water Reserve Account. Preliminary discussions with the KCWA indicate that an agreement for the short-term Water Reserve Account could be negotiated before February 15, 1998 (see Table 7).

Table 7

